The Didache as Christianity's Sole Written Authority: A Counterfactual History of Early Christianity, Rabbinic Judaism, and the Origins of Islam

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The historical *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, stands as one of the earliest surviving Christian documents outside the New Testament canon, offering a concise manual of ethical instruction, ritual practice, community governance, and eschatological expectation rather than narrative biography or systematic theology. In this counterfactual exercise we imagine a world in which this compact text, alongside the Hebrew Scriptures, constitutes the entirety of written Christian authority. No Gospels are composed, no letters of Paul or other apostles circulate, and no Apocalypse of John shapes later imagination. The Christian movement therefore develops without detailed accounts of Jesus' birth, parables, miracles, passion, or resurrection appearances, relying instead on oral tradition interpreted strictly through the lens of the *Didache*'s "Two Ways," its fixed prayers, its tested leadership structures, and its urgent call to watchfulness. Such a scenario forces a radical re-evaluation of nearly every subsequent development in Christian theology, Jewish-Christian relations, and the broader religious history of late antiquity. Christology remains implicit and functional rather than narrative or metaphysical; soteriology emphasizes lived righteousness and communal fidelity over forensic atonement; and eschatology, drawn directly from the text's final chapter, supplies a vivid and immediate horizon of expectation. Because the authoritative Christian voice stays closer in tone and content to Jewish ethical and liturgical traditions, the pressures that historically contributed to both the consolidation of rabbinic Judaism and the emergence of Islam in Arabia are substantially altered. This paper explores the cascading consequences of a *Didache*-only Christianity across theology, ecclesiology, interfaith dynamics, and long-term civilizational trajectories, offering a thought experiment that illuminates how much of later religious history depended on the specific documents that ultimately formed the New Testament canon.

Keywords: Didache, counterfactual history, New Testament canon, early Christianity, Two Ways, Christology, eschatology, rabbinic Judaism, Talmud, Quran, Jewish-Christian relations, monotheistic development, alternative history, Christian origins.

Note: The Appendix contains the full text of the Didache.

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1. The Historical Didache in Its Original Context

The *Didache* provides the sole fixed textual anchor for the counterfactual scenario explored in this paper. Before imagining a world in which it functions as Christianity's only written authority alongside the Hebrew Scriptures, it is necessary to establish what the document actually was in its historical setting: its discovery, dating, literary character, and early reception. These details matter because they reveal both the text's primitive features and the reasons it ultimately remained outside the New Testament canon.

Discovery and Manuscript Tradition The modern recovery of the *Didache* occurred in 1873 when Metropolitan Philotheos Bryennios, while examining manuscripts in the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople, identified a previously unknown Greek text within Codex Hierosolymitanus 54. This eleventh-century manuscript, dated 1056, also contained the Epistle of Barnabas, the First and Second Epistles of Clement, and other early Christian writings. Bryennios published the *Didache* in 1883, and its appearance immediately generated intense scholarly interest. The text's survival in a single medieval Greek manuscript, supplemented by fragmentary earlier witnesses in Coptic and Ethiopic versions and quotations in later church orders, underscores both its relative obscurity after the fourth century and the accidental nature of its preservation. No complete early copies circulated widely enough to enter the mainstream manuscript traditions that transmitted the New Testament writings.

Dating and Geographical Setting Scholarly estimates for the composition of the *Didache* generally cluster between the late first and mid-second centuries, with many specialists favoring a date in the final decades of the first century or the opening decades of the second. Several features support an early dating. The document still envisions a prominent role for itinerant apostles and prophets whose authenticity must be tested by behavior rather than by written credentials, suggesting a time before stable local hierarchies had fully displaced charismatic ministries. Its ethical teaching closely parallels material found in the Gospel of Matthew, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, yet without clear literary dependence on the finished canonical text. The baptismal and eucharistic instructions reflect practices that appear less developed than those attested in mid-second-century sources such as Justin Martyr. While precise provenance remains uncertain, the text's strong Jewish-Christian coloring, its use of the "Two Ways" ethical schema common in Jewish wisdom literature, and its address "to the nations" together suggest an origin in a Greek-speaking Jewish-Christian milieu, possibly in Syria or Palestine, though Egypt and Asia Minor have also been proposed. The document does not claim direct apostolic authorship; it presents itself as transmitting "the teaching of the Lord through the twelve apostles to the nations."

Literary Form and Content The *Didache* is not a gospel, an epistle, or an apocalypse. It is a compact church order or manual comprising sixteen short chapters. The first six chapters set

forth the “Two Ways” of life and death, offering concrete moral instruction on love of God and neighbor, enemy-love, sexual ethics, truthfulness, humility, and care for the poor. Chapters seven through ten regulate the central rituals of baptism and the Eucharist, including fixed thanksgiving prayers that rank among the earliest surviving examples of Christian liturgical language. Chapters eleven through thirteen provide criteria for discerning true and false apostles, prophets, and teachers, while chapter fourteen prescribes the Lord’s Day assembly and chapter fifteen directs the appointment of bishops and deacons. The final chapter delivers a terse but vivid eschatological scenario involving false prophets, a “world-deceiver,” a fiery trial, the resurrection of the dead, and the coming of the Lord on the clouds. Throughout, the tone is practical and prescriptive rather than narrative or speculative. The document assumes familiarity with certain gospel traditions, especially ethical material associated with Matthew, yet it does not retell the story of Jesus or develop extended theological argumentation.

Relationship to Emerging Christian Literature The *Didache* occupies a liminal position between oral apostolic teaching and the later written canon. Its ethical sections draw upon traditions that also appear in Matthew, raising unresolved questions about whether the *Didache* preserves an independent stream of Jesus tradition or reflects early knowledge of Matthean material. Its liturgical prayers and rules for prophets show no awareness of the developed Pauline theology of justification or the high Christology of the Fourth Gospel. This relative independence from the writings that would eventually form the New Testament helps explain both its early prestige in some communities and its later exclusion from the canon. It functioned as a practical guide for ordering community life rather than as a source of authoritative narrative or doctrine.

Early Christian Reception Evidence indicates that the *Didache* enjoyed significant, though not universal, respect in the second through fourth centuries. Its influence appears in later church orders such as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Some early writers treated it with respect bordering on canonical status, while others classified it among the disputed or spurious books. Eusebius of Caesarea listed it among writings that were not universally accepted as Scripture. By the late fourth century, as the contours of the New Testament canon stabilized around the four Gospels, Acts, the Pauline corpus, and a limited set of other letters and the Apocalypse, the *Didache* receded from prominence. Its practical rather than narrative or theological character, combined with the absence of a strong claim to direct apostolic authorship, contributed to its marginalization. It survived primarily through its incorporation into later compilations rather than as an independent scriptural text.

The historical *Didache* therefore represents a very early, pre-canonical expression of Christianity whose written authority was limited, practical, and closely tied to Jewish ethical and liturgical patterns. This baseline makes the counterfactual exercise both intelligible and consequential: when all other Christian writings are removed and this single manual is left standing virtually

alone, the subsequent development of Christian thought and practice, as well as its interactions with rabbinic Judaism and the later religious landscape of Arabia, must be reimagined from a markedly different starting point.

2. Constructing the Counterfactual: Eliminating the New Testament Corpus

Any rigorous counterfactual must begin by stating its rules with precision. The present exercise posits a historical trajectory in which the *Didache* functions as the sole written Christian authority alongside the Hebrew Scriptures. No other Christian texts achieve comparable status or widespread circulation as Scripture. This is not a claim that no other Christian writings would ever be produced, but rather that none of them attain the authoritative, widely recognized position eventually occupied by the New Testament canon. The distinction is important because it allows oral tradition and local teaching to continue while denying them fixed written form as binding Scripture.

Defining the Scope of the Thought Experiment The counterfactual operates by subtraction rather than addition. It removes the entire body of literature that historically came to constitute the New Testament while preserving the *Didache* in the form in which it has been transmitted. The Hebrew Scriptures remain fully authoritative and continue to shape Christian reading practices, worship, and moral reasoning. Oral traditions about Jesus persist and are transmitted from one generation to the next, yet they lack the stabilizing and authorizing force that written Gospels would have supplied. Later theological reflection, liturgical development, and ecclesiastical structures must therefore draw primarily upon the ethical, ritual, and eschatological content of the *Didache* itself. The exercise does not imagine a world in which Christianity disappears; it imagines a world in which Christianity develops from a markedly narrower and more practical written foundation.

What Is Removed: The New Testament Corpus The removal encompasses every major category of writing that entered the New Testament. The four canonical Gospels are absent, eliminating detailed narratives of Jesus' birth, public ministry, parables, miracles, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection appearances. The Acts of the Apostles is absent, removing the principal account of the early church's expansion and the theological rationale for the Gentile mission developed through the figure of Paul. The Pauline letters, together with the Catholic Epistles and the Epistle to the Hebrews, are absent, depriving later Christianity of extended theological argumentation concerning justification, the law, the person and work of Christ, the nature of the church, and Christian conduct in specific cultural settings. The Book of Revelation is absent, eliminating its distinctive apocalyptic symbolism, its vision of cosmic conflict, and its highly influential portrayal of the end times. In their place stands only the *Didache*, a short manual

whose authority derives from its claim to transmit apostolic teaching on ethics, worship, leadership, and watchfulness. The absence of these writings means that later generations lack fixed textual resources for constructing elaborate Christological or soteriological systems, for harmonizing conflicting accounts of Jesus' life, or for appealing to apostolic precedent in complex doctrinal disputes.

What Remains: The Hebrew Scriptures and the Didache The Hebrew Scriptures continue to function as the foundational written revelation. Christian communities read them as their own Scriptures, interpreting the law, prophets, and writings in light of the ethical and eschatological horizon supplied by the *Didache*. The *Didache* itself supplies the distinctive Christian lens: the "Two Ways" of life and death, concrete instructions for baptism and the Eucharist, criteria for authentic prophecy, directives for local leadership, and a terse but vivid scenario of final judgment and the Lord's return. Oral tradition about Jesus remains active. Stories of his life, death, and resurrection continue to circulate by word of mouth and are used in teaching and evangelism. However, these stories lack the fixed literary form and canonical prestige that written Gospels would confer. They are therefore more fluid, more subject to local variation, and more consistently interpreted through the practical and ethical categories already present in the *Didache*. The combination of an authoritative Old Testament and a single short Christian manual produces a Christianity that is ethically prescriptive, ritually ordered, and eschatologically urgent, yet comparatively thin in narrative and systematic theological resources.

Methodological Assumptions and Boundaries Several assumptions guide the construction of the scenario. First, the historical *Didache* already contains allusions to gospel traditions, particularly ethical material resembling the Sermon on the Mount. In the counterfactual these allusions are treated as references to shared oral teaching rather than to written texts possessing independent authority. Second, the exercise does not posit that the *Didache* would have been universally accepted or uniformly interpreted; local and regional variations would still arise. Third, the removal of the New Testament writings is treated as a decisive but not total absence; memory of Jesus and reflection upon his significance persist through preaching, catechesis, and worship, yet without the stabilizing and authorizing effect of canonical Gospels and letters. The boundaries of the counterfactual are therefore drawn around written authority rather than around religious experience or oral transmission.

Why This Particular Counterfactual Matters The choice to eliminate the entire New Testament corpus while retaining the *Didache* isolates the consequences of canonical formation itself. Historically, the eventual shape of Christian theology, ecclesiology, and interfaith relations depended heavily upon which documents achieved scriptural status. By removing the Gospels, the letters, and the Apocalypse, the exercise reveals how much of later Christian thought rested

upon specific narrative and argumentative resources that the *Didache* does not supply. It also highlights the contingent character of the "parting of the ways" between Christianity and rabbinic Judaism and of the religious environment in which Islam later emerged. Subsequent sections will trace the effects of this narrowed written foundation upon Christology, ethics, worship, eschatology, relations with Judaism, and the longer trajectory of monotheistic development in late antiquity and beyond. The rules established here ensure that each of those explorations proceeds from a consistent and clearly defined premise rather than from uncontrolled speculation.

3. The Ethical Core: The Two Ways as the Defining Christian Path

In the absence of written Gospels, apostolic letters, and apocalyptic visions, the ethical dualism of the *Didache*'s opening chapters would assume a position of unprecedented centrality. What historically functioned as one important strand of early Christian teaching would become the primary lens through which converts were formed, communities were ordered, and the meaning of following Jesus was articulated. The "Two Ways" of life and death would supply not merely introductory moral instruction but the defining grammar of Christian identity itself.

The Two Ways as Foundational Instruction The *Didache* opens by presenting two paths with a great difference between them. The Way of Life is summarized in the commands to love God and neighbor, to do to others what one would wish done to oneself, and to bless those who curse, pray for enemies, and fast for persecutors. It then unfolds into a series of concrete prohibitions and positive exhortations covering sexual conduct, speech, anger, greed, hypocrisy, and care for the vulnerable. The Way of Death is catalogued as a lengthy list of vices that lead ultimately to destruction. In a setting where no narrative account of Jesus' life or extended theological argumentation exists in written form, these chapters would serve as the principal written resource for moral formation. New believers would be instructed in the Two Ways before or alongside baptism, and the ethical contrast would function as the basic framework for ongoing catechesis and self-examination.

Moral Formation and Catechesis Without the parables, miracles, or passion narratives that historically enriched Christian moral imagination, teaching would rely heavily on the *Didache*'s direct, apodictic style. Converts would learn that Christian identity consists above all in choosing and remaining on the Way of Life. The text's repeated address to the hearer as "my child" would reinforce a familial, pedagogical relationship between teacher and disciple. Practices such as daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer, regular fasting, and almsgiving would be presented not as optional disciplines but as constitutive elements of walking the Way of Life. The call to "be perfect" if one is able to bear the whole yoke would set a high, though not impossible,

standard. Moral formation would therefore be practical, incremental, and oriented toward visible transformation rather than primarily toward intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions.

Community Identity and Boundary Marking The Two Ways would also supply a powerful means of communal self-understanding. To be a Christian would mean, first and foremost, to have turned from the Way of Death to the Way of Life. This binary would create clear internal expectations and external boundaries. Within the community, members would be accountable to one another for conduct that either advanced or contradicted the Way of Life. Reconciliation before participation in the Lord's Day assembly would be understood as essential to maintaining the purity of the community's sacrifice. Externally, the contrast between the two ways would serve as a form of apologetic and evangelistic appeal: the Christian movement would present itself as offering a coherent and demanding ethical alternative to the surrounding culture. At the same time, the strong emphasis on enemy-love and non-retaliation would prevent the boundary from hardening into simple hostility toward outsiders.

Reading the Hebrew Scriptures Through the Two Ways The Hebrew Scriptures would remain the foundational written revelation, yet they would be read consistently through the ethical categories supplied by the *Didache*. The law and the prophets would be interpreted as revealing and reinforcing the Way of Life, while warnings against idolatry, injustice, and hardness of heart would be aligned with the catalogue of vices that constitute the Way of Death. The absence of Pauline argumentation concerning the law would remove one major source of tension in early Christian interpretation of Scripture. Instead, the ethical dualism of the *Didache* would encourage a reading of the Old Testament that emphasizes continuity in moral demand while locating the distinctive Christian contribution in the concrete practices of baptism, Eucharist, and tested prophetic ministry. The result would be a Christianity whose engagement with its scriptural inheritance remained deeply ethical and practical rather than primarily typological or Christological in a narrative sense.

Relationship to Eschatological Expectation The ethical teaching of the Two Ways would be closely linked to the eschatological vision of the *Didache*'s final chapter. Those who remain on the Way of Life are promised deliverance in the time of trial and participation in the resurrection of the righteous. The vivid description of false prophets, the world-deceiver, and the coming of the Lord on the clouds would function not as abstract apocalyptic speculation but as urgent motivation for ethical perseverance. Endurance in the Way of Life would be understood as the concrete form of readiness for the Lord's return. This integration of ethics and eschatology would give the community both a clear present task and a compelling future horizon without requiring the elaborate symbolic apparatus found in other early Christian apocalyptic writings.

Strengths and Potential Limitations of an Ethically Centered Christianity A Christianity whose written authority centered on the Two Ways would possess notable strengths. It would offer converts a coherent, actionable path of discipleship from the moment of instruction. It would foster communities marked by visible moral seriousness, mutual accountability, generosity toward the poor, and commitment to reconciliation. The emphasis on enemy-love and non-retaliation would provide resources for responding to hostility without mirroring it. At the same time, the relative absence of extended reflection on grace, forgiveness, and the inner dynamics of transformation could create certain vulnerabilities. The high ethical demand might, in some contexts, generate anxiety or a sense of inadequacy. Without narrative accounts of Jesus' own mercy toward sinners or theological arguments concerning justification, communities might struggle to articulate how failure and restoration fit within the framework of the Two Ways. Later developments in Christian thought would therefore need to address these questions largely through oral tradition and pastoral practice rather than through appeal to authoritative written texts.

In sum, the Two Ways would not remain one element among others in Christian formation. They would become the central and organizing reality through which the meaning of Christian life was understood and enacted. This ethical concentration would distinguish the movement both from surrounding cultures and from alternative trajectories that might have developed had other written authorities been available. The consequences of this concentration for Christology, worship, relations with Judaism, and longer-term religious development are traced in the sections that follow.

4. Christology and Understandings of Jesus and Salvation

With no written Gospels or apostolic letters available, the portrait of Jesus available to Christian communities would be drawn from a narrow set of sources: the titles and references contained in the *Didache* itself, the Hebrew Scriptures read through the lens of that manual, and fluid oral traditions whose interpretation would be guided by the ethical and liturgical framework already established in the text. The resulting Christology would be functional and liturgical rather than narrative or metaphysical, and soteriology would be oriented primarily toward faithful perseverance in the Way of Life.

Sources for Christology in the Counterfactual In the absence of the four Gospels, communities would lack extended accounts of Jesus' birth, ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection. The letters that historically developed extended reflection on his person and work would also be missing. The *Didache* therefore supplies the principal written vocabulary for speaking about Jesus. Its references are brief but consistent. Jesus is addressed as "the Lord," identified as "Thy

Servant," associated with the "holy vine of David," and described as the one through whom God has made known life, knowledge, and immortality. The final chapter anticipates his return as the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven, accompanied by all his saints. These scattered designations, together with the Hebrew Scriptures and continuing oral memory, would form the basis for all subsequent reflection on who Jesus is and what he has accomplished.

Titles and Designations of Jesus in the Didache The *Didache* employs a modest but significant range of titles. The repeated address to God as "our Father" and the thanksgiving for what has been revealed "through Jesus Thy Servant" presents Jesus in a servant role that echoes the Servant Songs of Isaiah while also implying unique mediation. The phrase "Son of David" connects him to royal and messianic expectation within the Jewish scriptural tradition. The simple designation "the Lord" is used both for God and for Jesus in ways that create functional overlap without explicit ontological definition. In the eschatological scenario, "the Lord" who comes on the clouds is clearly the returning Jesus. These titles together suggest a figure who is more than a prophet or teacher yet whose precise relationship to God remains expressed through functional and relational language rather than through the developed categories that would later appear in conciliar definitions.

Functional and Liturgical Christology Because the *Didache* is a manual of practice rather than a theological treatise, its Christology is embedded in worship and ethics rather than in abstract argument. The Eucharist prayers give thanks for life and knowledge made known through Jesus and for the gathering of the church into the kingdom prepared by God. Participation in these prayers would repeatedly reinforce the conviction that Jesus is the unique mediator of divine gifts. The command to baptize "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" introduces a triadic formula whose precise meaning would be worked out in practice rather than through written doctrinal elaboration. Christology would therefore be learned and expressed liturgically: Jesus is the one in whose name the community is gathered, through whom its thanksgivings ascend, and by whose return its hope is sustained. This functional approach would make Christology immediately relevant to daily life and communal worship while leaving room for later development through oral teaching and reflection.

Soteriology: Salvation as Walking the Way of Life Without the extended discussions of justification, atonement, or union with Christ found in the Pauline letters, soteriology would be shaped primarily by the ethical dualism of the Two Ways. Salvation would be understood as remaining on the Way of Life until the end and being found faithful when the Lord returns. The text's closing exhortation to watchfulness and its promise that those who endure will be saved from under the curse itself would link present conduct directly to future deliverance. Oral traditions about Jesus' death and resurrection would continue to circulate and would be interpreted as confirming the reality of the coming judgment and the hope of resurrection for

those who have walked the Way of Life. Forgiveness and restoration would be available within the community through confession and reconciliation, yet these would be framed within the larger ethical demand rather than as the central soteriological mechanism. The result would be a soteriology that is deeply moral and eschatological: one is saved by persevering in the concrete practices and dispositions that constitute the Way of Life.

Interaction with Oral Tradition Oral stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection would remain important, especially in evangelism and in the instruction of new believers. These stories would not, however, possess independent written authority. They would be told and heard through the interpretive grid supplied by the *Didache*. Narratives of Jesus' mercy toward sinners or his confrontations with religious authorities would be heard as illustrations of the Way of Life rather than as independent sources for new theological claims. Accounts of his death and resurrection would reinforce the eschatological hope expressed in chapter sixteen without generating the detailed atonement theories that historically emerged from reflection on the cross in light of scriptural interpretation. Oral tradition would thus enrich and illustrate the ethical and liturgical framework rather than challenge or expand it in written form.

Strengths and Limitations of This Christological Profile A Christology developed primarily from the *Didache* would possess notable strengths. It would remain closely tied to worship, ethics, and eschatological hope, avoiding the risk of becoming an abstract metaphysical system detached from practice. The servant and Davidic titles would preserve strong continuity with Jewish scriptural expectation while the triadic baptismal formula and the language of mediation would point toward a distinctive Christian confession. At the same time, the absence of extended narrative and argumentative resources would create certain limitations. Communities might find it more difficult to articulate the significance of Jesus' death in relation to forgiveness or to develop a robust account of how divine grace operates in the life of the believer. Questions concerning the full humanity and divinity of Jesus would likely arise later through pastoral need or external challenge rather than through internal written resources. Subsequent theological development would therefore depend heavily on the continuing vitality of oral tradition and on the community's ability to interpret new situations in light of the functional Christology already present in its authoritative manual.

In this counterfactual, Christology and soteriology would be less a separate doctrinal domain and more an integrated dimension of walking the Way of Life. Jesus would be known above all as the Servant and Lord through whom the gifts of life and knowledge have come and through whom the church awaits final deliverance. The consequences of this integrated, practice-oriented profile for ecclesiology, relations with Judaism, and longer-term doctrinal development are examined in the sections that follow.

5. Community Structure, Leadership, and Liturgical Practice

In a setting where the *Didache* constitutes the primary written Christian authority, its detailed prescriptions for worship, leadership, and communal order would assume a defining role. Without narrative Gospels or theological letters to provide alternative models or counterbalances, these practical instructions would shape the visible form of Christian community more decisively than they did historically. The text's regulations for baptism, daily and weekly rhythms, the Eucharist, prophetic ministry, and local oversight would together constitute the primary expression of what it meant to live as the people of the Way of Life.

Baptism as Entry into the Way of Life Baptism would function as the decisive transition from the Way of Death to the Way of Life. The *Didache*'s instructions emphasize preparation through fasting by both the candidate and the baptizer, preference for living water, allowance for pouring when necessary, and administration in the triadic name. In the absence of extended narratives of Jesus' own baptism or theological reflection on the meaning of the rite, these practical directives would stand as the authoritative norm. Baptism would be understood as the public and ritual enactment of choosing the Way of Life, accompanied by ethical instruction in the Two Ways. The requirement of prior fasting would underscore the seriousness of the step and would link the rite directly to the disciplined character of Christian existence. Over time, baptismal practice would likely remain relatively uniform across communities because the written instructions are specific and prescriptive rather than open to wide variation.

Regular Rhythms of Prayer and Fasting The *Didache* establishes clear patterns for daily and weekly spiritual discipline. The Lord's Prayer is to be recited three times each day, and fasting is prescribed on Wednesdays and Fridays rather than on the days observed by "hypocrites." These rhythms would provide a stable framework for personal and communal piety. In a context without extensive written devotional or theological literature, these simple, repeatable practices would serve as the primary means of maintaining spiritual focus and corporate identity. Fasting would function both as preparation for baptism and as an ongoing expression of repentance and readiness. The regular recitation of the Lord's Prayer would continually reinforce the community's relationship to God as Father and its hope for the coming kingdom. These disciplines would be accessible to all members and would create a shared spiritual culture even in the absence of more elaborate written resources.

The Eucharist as Central Act of Thanksgiving and Unity The Eucharist prayers preserved in the *Didache* would become the principal liturgical texts through which the community expressed its faith and identity. The thanksgivings over the cup and the broken bread focus on God's gifts of life, knowledge, and the gathering of the church, while the post-communion prayer looks forward to the perfection of the church and the passing away of the present world. Participation is restricted to those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord, underscoring the

connection between ethical initiation and sacramental fellowship. The allowance for prophets to offer spontaneous thanksgiving introduces a controlled element of charismatic freedom within an otherwise fixed liturgical structure. In the counterfactual scenario, these prayers would serve as the primary written expression of Christology and eschatological hope. The weekly breaking of bread on the Lord's Day, preceded by confession and reconciliation, would constitute the central act through which the community experienced unity, offered thanks, and maintained its ethical integrity.

Testing and Regulation of Charismatic Ministry The *Didache* devotes significant attention to the discernment of true and false apostles, prophets, and teachers. Itinerant ministers are to be received hospitably but tested by their conduct: they may stay only one or two days, must not ask for money, and are to be judged by whether their words and lives align with the teaching already received. True prophets who settle in a community are to be supported, while false ones are to be rejected. These regulations would provide a clear mechanism for managing charismatic ministry in the absence of written apostolic letters that might otherwise serve as standards of orthodoxy. The emphasis on observable behavior rather than on claims to inspiration alone would protect communities from exploitation while still allowing genuine prophetic ministry. Over time, these testing procedures would likely contribute to a gradual shift in authority toward more stable local leadership as the risks associated with itinerant figures became more apparent.

Local Leadership and Oversight Alongside the regulation of itinerant ministry, the *Didache* directs communities to appoint bishops and deacons who are meek, truthful, not lovers of money, and already proved. These local officers are described as rendering the same service as prophets and teachers. In the counterfactual, this provision would encourage the development of recognized local leadership structures relatively early. The qualifications emphasize moral character and alignment with the Way of Life rather than specific doctrinal expertise or administrative skill. Bishops and deacons would be responsible for maintaining order, overseeing the distribution of resources, and ensuring that the community's worship and common life remain consistent with the teaching of the *Didache*. The combination of tested charismatic ministry and morally qualified local oversight would create a hybrid model of authority that balances spontaneity with accountability.

The Lord's Day Assembly and Communal Purity The weekly gathering on the Lord's Day is presented as an occasion for breaking bread, giving thanks, and confessing transgressions so that the community's sacrifice may remain pure. No one at odds with another is to participate until reconciliation has occurred. This requirement would make ethical relationship a precondition for full participation in worship. In the absence of more elaborate written liturgical texts or theological treatises on the meaning of the assembly, the *Didache*'s instructions would

establish a clear pattern: worship is corporate, confessional, reconciling, and ethically serious. The assembly would function as both the high point of the community's weekly life and the regular occasion for reinforcing its identity as the people of the Way of Life.

Overall Shape of Christian Community Life Taken together, these prescriptions would produce Christian communities that are visibly ordered, ethically accountable, and liturgically consistent. Daily prayer, weekly fasting, regular Eucharist, tested ministry, and local oversight would together form a coherent pattern of life. The community would be marked by a strong sense of shared practice and mutual responsibility. At the same time, the relative absence of written theological resources could create challenges in responding to new questions or external challenges that are not directly addressed in the *Didache*. Communities would need to rely heavily on oral tradition, pastoral wisdom, and the continuing guidance of tested prophets and local leaders to interpret novel situations in light of the foundational ethical and liturgical instructions they possessed.

In this counterfactual, Christian community life would be shaped more by concrete directives for worship and order than by narrative or doctrinal elaboration. The visible practices of baptism, prayer, fasting, Eucharist, and tested leadership would constitute the primary means through which the Way of Life was embodied and transmitted. The long-term consequences of this practical and liturgical concentration for institutional development and interfaith relations are explored in subsequent sections.

6. Eschatological Vision and Its Influence on Christian Life

In the absence of the Gospels' more extended discourses on the end times and without the elaborate symbolic world of the Book of Revelation, the short but vivid eschatological scenario in the final chapter of the *Didache* would become the primary written horizon for Christian expectation. This scenario would exert a powerful influence on ethics, worship, mission, and communal endurance, binding present conduct closely to future hope and judgment.

The Content of the Didache's Eschatological Vision Chapter sixteen presents a concise sequence of events. False prophets and corrupters will multiply, and love will turn into hate. Lawlessness will increase, leading to mutual betrayal and persecution. Then the world-deceiver will appear, claiming to be the Son of God and performing signs and wonders. The earth will be delivered into his hands, and many will stumble and perish in a time of fiery trial. Those who endure in their faith will be saved. The signs of the truth will then appear: an outspreading in heaven, the sound of the trumpet, and the resurrection of the dead—not of all, but of the righteous. Finally, the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven with all his

saints. This compact vision supplies the main written framework for understanding the future in the counterfactual scenario.

Integration with the Two Ways and Ethical Life The eschatological vision is closely linked to the ethical teaching of the Two Ways. The command to "watch for your life's sake" and to keep lamps burning and loins girded directly connects moral vigilance with readiness for the Lord's return. Those who remain on the Way of Life are promised deliverance in the time of trial, while the catalogue of vices that constitutes the Way of Death is implicitly aligned with the lawlessness and betrayal that precede the appearance of the world-deceiver. In this framework, ethical perseverance is not merely a present obligation but the concrete form of preparation for eschatological salvation. Daily choices regarding speech, relationships, generosity, and fidelity are invested with ultimate significance because they determine whether one will endure when testing comes.

Watchfulness and Communal Readiness The *Didache*'s eschatology would encourage a posture of ongoing watchfulness within Christian communities. The warning that "the whole time of your faith will not profit you if you are not made perfect in the last time" would function as a continual call to self-examination and mutual accountability. Regular practices such as the Lord's Day assembly, confession of sins, and reconciliation before the Eucharist would be understood not only as expressions of present community life but as means of maintaining readiness for the end. The vivid description of the world-deceiver and the fiery trial would keep the possibility of severe testing before the community's imagination, fostering resilience and solidarity. At the same time, the promise of the resurrection of the righteous and the coming of the Lord on the clouds would provide strong grounds for hope amid difficulty.

Mission and Endurance in Light of the End The eschatological horizon would also shape the community's sense of mission. The multiplication of false prophets and the turning of love into hate would be interpreted as signs that the time is short and that faithful witness is urgently needed. The command to gather often and to seek the things that befit the soul would encourage both internal strengthening and outward testimony. Endurance under persecution or social pressure would be framed as participation in the final trial through which the faithful are purified and preserved. Without more elaborate apocalyptic symbolism or detailed timetables, mission would likely remain focused on the clear ethical alternative offered by the Way of Life and on the hope of the Lord's return rather than on complex prophetic speculation.

Interaction with Oral Tradition Oral traditions concerning Jesus' teaching about the end times and his own return would continue to circulate and would be interpreted in light of the *Didache*'s written scenario. Stories of Jesus warning his disciples to watch and pray, or promising to come again, would reinforce rather than contradict the expectations found in chapter sixteen. Because these traditions lack independent written authority, they would be harmonized

with the *Didache*'s framework rather than generating alternative eschatological systems. The result would be a relatively unified eschatological outlook centered on ethical perseverance, the appearance of a deceptive figure, a time of testing, and the visible return of the Lord with his saints.

Strengths and Vulnerabilities of This Eschatological Horizon This eschatological vision would bring notable strengths. It would provide a clear and compelling motivation for ethical living and communal solidarity. The integration of watchfulness with concrete moral practice would help prevent eschatological hope from becoming detached from daily conduct. The promise of resurrection and the Lord's coming would offer strong encouragement to those facing hostility or hardship. At the same time, certain vulnerabilities would exist. The brevity and intensity of the scenario could, in some contexts, generate anxiety or an overly urgent atmosphere that might discourage long-term planning or engagement with surrounding society. If the expected events were delayed, communities might experience disappointment or the temptation to reinterpret the vision in increasingly symbolic or spiritualized ways. Without additional written resources to provide balance or nuance, responses to such challenges would depend heavily on the wisdom of local leaders and the continuing vitality of oral tradition.

Long-term Influence on Christian Identity Over time, the *Didache*'s eschatological vision would help shape a distinctive Christian identity marked by ethical seriousness, communal accountability, and hopeful watchfulness. The expectation of the Lord's return on the clouds would remain a living hope rather than a distant doctrinal article. This hope would be closely tied to the present task of walking the Way of Life and maintaining the purity of the community's worship and relationships. The absence of more elaborate apocalyptic literature would likely keep eschatological reflection more focused on ethical readiness and less prone to elaborate speculation, while the vividness of chapter sixteen would prevent hope from becoming merely abstract or otherworldly.

In this counterfactual, eschatology would function less as a separate theological topic and more as the horizon that gives ultimate meaning and urgency to the ethical and liturgical life already prescribed in the *Didache*. The consequences of this integrated eschatological vision for relations with Judaism and for longer-term religious development are examined in the sections that follow.

7. Continuity and Tension with the Hebrew Scriptures

In the counterfactual scenario, the Hebrew Scriptures would remain the foundational written revelation for Christian communities. Without the Gospels, Pauline letters, or other New Testament writings to introduce alternative frameworks for interpretation, the *Didache* would

serve as the principal lens through which these Scriptures were read and applied. This arrangement would produce a distinctive pattern of both deep continuity with Jewish tradition and measured differentiation centered on Christian ritual and eschatological hope.

The Hebrew Scriptures as Foundational Authority The Hebrew Scriptures would continue to function as the primary source of divine revelation and moral instruction. Communities would read the Law, Prophets, and Writings as their own Scriptures, hearing in them the voice of the God who made heaven and earth and who had entered into covenant with Israel. Because no written Christian texts would challenge or relativize the authority of these writings, the Old Testament would retain a more unqualified status than it often held in historical Christian development. Preaching, teaching, and ethical exhortation would draw extensively upon its narratives, commandments, and promises, with the *Didache* providing guidance on how its moral demands were to be understood and lived in the present.

The Two Ways as Interpretive Lens The ethical dualism of the *Didache*'s opening chapters would become the dominant framework for interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures. The contrast between the Way of Life and the Way of Death would be used to organize and apply the moral teaching of the Law and the Prophets. Passages emphasizing love of God and neighbor, care for the vulnerable, justice, truthfulness, and humility would be highlighted as expressions of the Way of Life, while warnings against idolatry, oppression, falsehood, and hardness of heart would be aligned with the Way of Death. This approach would encourage a reading of Scripture that is fundamentally ethical and practical. The absence of extended arguments concerning the law's relationship to faith or the obsolescence of certain ceremonial requirements would reduce one major source of interpretive tension that historically appeared in early Christian exegesis.

Continuity in Ethics, Prayer, and Practice A *Didache*-only Christianity would exhibit strong continuity with Jewish ethical and devotional traditions. The Two Ways teaching itself echoes patterns found in Jewish wisdom literature and sectarian writings. The prescribed rhythms of fasting on specific days and the daily recitation of a fixed prayer would parallel Jewish practices while introducing distinctively Christian content in the Lord's Prayer. The emphasis on almsgiving, reconciliation, sexual purity, and care for the poor would align closely with longstanding Jewish moral priorities. In worship, the thanksgiving prayers over the cup and bread would reflect Jewish forms of blessing while redirecting them toward the gifts made known through Jesus. This continuity would make the Christian movement appear, in many respects, as a rigorous ethical and devotional renewal within the broader Jewish world rather than as a sharply differentiated new religion.

Distinctive Christian Elements and Their Integration Differentiation would arise primarily through the ritual and eschatological elements introduced by the *Didache*. Baptism in the triadic name, the restriction of the Eucharist to the baptized, and the fixed thanksgiving prayers would

mark Christian practice as distinctive even while remaining within a Jewish ethical and scriptural framework. The functional Christology expressed in the prayers—Jesus as Servant and Lord through whom life and knowledge have come—would provide a Christian center without requiring the development of elaborate metaphysical categories. The eschatological expectation of the Lord's return on the clouds, accompanied by the resurrection of the righteous, would add a specifically Christian horizon to the hope already present in the Hebrew Scriptures. These elements would be integrated into the larger ethical vision rather than set in opposition to it, allowing communities to maintain substantial continuity with Jewish Scripture and practice while affirming Jesus as the one through whom God's gifts are now mediated.

Reduced Sources of Tension with Jewish Tradition The absence of written texts that historically generated sharp contrasts between old and new covenants, or between law and faith, would significantly reduce certain sources of tension. Without extended arguments that could be read as supersessionist or as diminishing the ongoing significance of the law, Christian engagement with the Hebrew Scriptures would likely remain more consistently affirmative. The *Didache*'s own respectful use of Jewish ethical patterns and liturgical forms would reinforce this posture. Communities would be less inclined to define themselves through explicit rejection of Jewish practice and more inclined to present the Way of Life as the faithful continuation and fulfillment of the moral demand already revealed in Scripture. This configuration could slow the process of separation between the Jesus movement and other Jewish groups and might allow for longer periods of overlap or mutual recognition in some regions.

Implications for Identity and Boundary Formation Christian identity would be formed around the combination of shared Scripture, shared ethical commitment to the Two Ways, and distinctive ritual practices centered on Jesus. Boundaries with surrounding Jewish communities would likely be more permeable and less sharply drawn than in trajectories that developed stronger supersessionist theologies. At the same time, the requirement of baptism, the exclusive participation in the Eucharist, and the expectation of the Lord's return would create meaningful points of differentiation. The testing of prophets and teachers would serve as an internal mechanism for maintaining fidelity to the teaching received, including its integration with the Hebrew Scriptures. Overall, identity would be defined more by positive ethical and liturgical practice than by explicit negation of Jewish tradition.

Long-term Trajectories of Continuity and Differentiation Over time, a *Didache*-only Christianity might sustain a higher degree of continuity with Jewish scriptural interpretation and ethical tradition than emerged historically. The ethical dualism of the Two Ways would provide a stable bridge between the moral teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian practice. Distinctiveness would remain centered in the person of Jesus as the one through whom life and knowledge have come and in the eschatological hope of his return. This pattern could allow for

more extended periods of interaction and mutual influence between Christian and Jewish communities before clearer lines of separation became dominant. At the same time, the absence of written resources for more elaborate Christological or covenantal argumentation might limit the development of strong theological justifications for separation, leaving differentiation more dependent on ritual practice and eschatological conviction than on doctrinal system.

In this counterfactual, the Hebrew Scriptures would function not as an old covenant to be surpassed but as the enduring foundation whose moral and spiritual demand is now lived out through the Way of Life taught by the apostles and centered on Jesus. The consequences of this configuration for relations with emerging rabbinic Judaism are examined in the following section.

8. Altered Pathways in the Development of Rabbinic Judaism

The emergence of a *Didache*-only Christianity would significantly alter the historical pressures that contributed to the consolidation of rabbinic Judaism and the production of the Talmud. Because this form of Christianity would remain closer in ethical tone, liturgical practice, and scriptural engagement to existing Jewish traditions, it would generate less of the theological and social friction that historically accelerated the need for clear boundary-marking and comprehensive legal codification.

Historical Pressures Shaping Rabbinic Judaism Following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Jewish communities faced the loss of the central institution of sacrifice and the Sanhedrin. In response, rabbinic sages undertook a long process of preserving, interpreting, and adapting Jewish law and tradition for a new situation. This process eventually produced the Mishnah and, centuries later, the extensive dialectical discussions of the Talmud. One important factor in this development was the need to define authentic Jewish practice and belief in the face of internal diversity and external challenges, including the growing Jesus movement.

The Role of Emerging Christianity in Boundary Formation Historically, the spread of Christianity and its developing theological claims contributed to rabbinic efforts to clarify boundaries. As Christian communities increasingly distinguished themselves through Christological convictions and ritual practices, rabbinic sources began to address questions of heresy, improper belief, and association with minim. These discussions helped shape a more defined rabbinic identity over against competing interpretations of Jewish tradition. The presence of written Christian texts that could be read as claiming fulfillment or replacement of aspects of the law and covenant added impetus to the project of articulating a coherent and authoritative body of tradition capable of sustaining Jewish life without the Temple.

Reduced Theological and Polemical Pressure in the Counterfactual In the counterfactual scenario, the Jesus movement would present a markedly less theologically aggressive profile. Its authoritative text would emphasize ethical dualism, practical righteousness, and liturgical continuity with Jewish forms rather than extended arguments concerning the obsolescence of the law or the superiority of a new covenant. The functional Christology expressed through titles such as Servant and Lord, combined with strong ethical and eschatological continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures, would make the movement appear more as a rigorous ethical renewal within Judaism than as a direct challenge to its foundational claims. Consequently, the perceived threat to rabbinic authority and to the integrity of Jewish tradition would be substantially lower. This reduction in theological friction would decrease the urgency of drawing sharp lines against Christian interpretations.

Consequences for the Development of the Talmud The diminished need for defensive boundary-marking would likely affect both the timing and the character of the Talmudic project. The massive dialectical structure of the Babylonian Talmud, with its extensive discussions of legal minutiae and its engagement with dissenting views, was shaped in part by the need to create a comprehensive and authoritative system capable of withstanding external challenges. With less external theological pressure from a Christianity that remained ethically and liturgically closer to Jewish patterns, the impetus for such an extensive and combative codification might be weaker. The resulting tradition could be smaller in scale, more focused on midrashic and ethical interpretation, or more regionally varied. Alternatively, the process of codification might occur later or take a different literary form, emphasizing continuity with earlier wisdom and legal traditions rather than dialectical engagement with potential heresies.

Alternative Trajectories for Jewish Legal and Interpretive Tradition Without the same degree of external pressure, rabbinic Judaism might have preserved greater internal diversity for a longer period. Sectarian or renewal movements within Judaism, including forms of the Jesus movement that remained Torah-observant and ethically aligned with the Two Ways, could have continued to interact with emerging rabbinic centers rather than being quickly categorized as outside the fold. This environment might have favored the development of interpretive traditions that were more synthetic and less polemical. The ethical dualism shared between the *Didache* and certain strands of Jewish wisdom literature could have provided common ground for ongoing conversation rather than serving as a point of separation. Over time, Jewish legal and interpretive tradition might have evolved along lines that placed greater emphasis on practical piety, communal ethics, and scriptural exposition with less need for extensive defensive elaboration.

Implications for Jewish-Christian Interaction The altered dynamics would likely permit longer and more fluid interaction between rabbinic communities and Christian groups. Because

Christian identity would be expressed more through ethical practice, baptism, and eucharistic thanksgiving than through explicit supersessionist theology, points of contact and mutual influence could persist in some regions well into the second and third centuries. Rabbinic authorities might have viewed at least some Christian communities as rigorous but still recognizably Jewish ethical movements rather than as fundamentally alien. This situation could have produced more varied patterns of relationship, ranging from continued overlap in some locales to clearer separation in others, rather than a relatively uniform trajectory of differentiation.

Long-term Effects on Jewish Identity and Diversity Over the longer term, a less pressured rabbinic tradition might have sustained greater pluralism within Jewish life. The strong emphasis on ethical dualism and practical righteousness found in the *Didache* could have resonated with existing Jewish moral traditions, allowing for continued cross-fertilization rather than mutual exclusion. At the same time, the distinctive Christian rituals and eschatological hope centered on Jesus would still have created meaningful differentiation. The overall result would likely be a more gradual and regionally varied process of identity formation on both sides, with less abrupt or total separation than occurred historically. Jewish communities might have retained more internal diversity in legal interpretation and theological emphasis well into late antiquity.

In this counterfactual, the development of rabbinic Judaism would proceed under conditions of reduced external theological challenge. The resulting tradition might be less comprehensive in its dialectical form, more continuous with earlier ethical and midrashic patterns, and more open to extended interaction with a Christianity that remained ethically and scripturally close to its Jewish roots. The consequences of these altered dynamics for the religious environment of late antique Arabia and the emergence of Islam are examined in the following section.

9. Reimagining the Religious Landscape of Arabia and the Emergence of Islam

The religious environment of late antique Arabia would be substantially transformed by the prior development of a *Didache*-only Christianity and the correspondingly altered trajectory of rabbinic Judaism. These changes would affect both the character of existing monotheistic communities in the region and the conditions under which any new prophetic movement might arise.

The Historical Religious Environment of Late Antique Arabia In the early seventh century, the Arabian Peninsula contained a complex mix of religious communities. Pagan Arab tribes practiced polytheistic traditions centered on local deities and sacred sites. Jewish communities, some long established and others more recently arrived, maintained distinct practices and communal structures. Christian presence included both Byzantine-aligned churches and various

independent or dissenting groups, some of which preserved more Jewish-Christian features in their theology and practice. This diverse environment provided the setting in which the revelations associated with Muhammad emerged and were initially received.

The Altered Profile of Christianity in the Counterfactual In the counterfactual scenario, Christianity reaching Arabia would reflect the ethical, liturgical, and eschatological emphases of the *Didache* rather than the fuller theological developments associated with the New Testament canon. Its profile would feature strong continuity with Jewish ethical traditions through the Two Ways, fixed thanksgiving prayers in worship, baptism in the triadic name, and an eschatological expectation centered on the return of the Lord on the clouds. Christological expression would remain largely functional and relational, focused on Jesus as Servant and Lord through whom life and knowledge have come. The absence of extended written arguments concerning the Trinity, the precise nature of the incarnation, or the theological meaning of the cross would mean that Christian communities in or near Arabia would present a lower and more ethically oriented form of monotheism. This profile would likely appear less doctrinally provocative to Jewish and pagan observers than the Christianity that historically interacted with early Islam.

Changes in Jewish Communities and Their Interactions As outlined in the previous section, rabbinic Judaism in this timeline would likely experience less external theological pressure and might retain greater internal diversity or continuity with earlier interpretive traditions. Jewish communities in Arabia could therefore maintain stronger connections with broader Jewish ethical and scriptural patterns while interacting with a Christianity that shared significant ethical and liturgical ground. This situation might reduce the sharpness of competition between Jewish and Christian groups and could allow for more fluid exchange of ideas and practices. The overall monotheistic presence in Arabia would appear more continuous with established Jewish traditions and less marked by sharp doctrinal differentiation.

Modified Byzantine and Regional Christian Influence The slower or differently configured spread of imperial Christianity in this counterfactual would also affect the Arabian context. A Christianity whose written authorities remained limited to the *Didache* and the Hebrew Scriptures might expand more gradually and with less direct association with Byzantine political and military power. Christian communities in the region might therefore appear less as extensions of an imperial religious system and more as local ethical and devotional movements. This reduced association with imperial Christianity could lessen the perception of Christianity as a political or cultural threat and might alter the alliances and conflicts that historically shaped the environment in which early Islam emerged.

Implications for the Emergence of a New Prophetic Movement The combination of a less theologically aggressive Christianity, more continuous forms of Jewish presence, and reduced Byzantine imperial pressure would create a significantly different religious landscape in Arabia.

In this environment, the specific critiques and affirmations that characterize the historical Quran—particularly its engagement with Trinitarian doctrine, its portrayal of Jesus as prophet rather than divine Son, and its reinterpretation of biblical narratives—might not arise in the same form. A new prophetic figure could still emerge, but the content of revelation would likely respond to different questions and concerns. The ethical dualism, emphasis on monotheistic purity, and eschatological urgency already present in the *Didache* and in Jewish tradition could provide common ground or points of resonance rather than serving as targets for correction.

Possible Character of Revelation in This Environment Any scripture emerging in this altered context might emphasize themes already prominent in the religious environment: the unity of God, the importance of ethical conduct aligned with the Way of Life, care for the vulnerable, and preparation for divine judgment. It could engage the functional Christology and eschatological hope expressed in the *Didache* more directly than the developed doctrinal positions that historically became points of contention. The resulting movement might present itself less as a sharp correction of existing monotheisms and more as a call to renewed ethical and devotional fidelity within a broadly shared monotheistic framework. Alternatively, the conditions might not produce a new scripture at all, or might produce one whose character and trajectory differed substantially from historical Islam.

Long-term Trajectories for Monotheistic Development in Arabia Over the longer term, the religious history of Arabia and its surrounding regions would likely follow different paths. Without the historical form of Islamic expansion, the political, cultural, and religious map of the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond would be transformed. Jewish communities might experience different patterns of interaction and protection. Christian communities shaped by the *Didache*'s ethical and liturgical priorities might develop along trajectories that preserved stronger continuity with Jewish scriptural and moral traditions. The absence or altered character of a major new monotheistic scripture would remove one of the most consequential forces in late antique and medieval religious history, leaving the field open for other developments or for the continued evolution of existing traditions in new directions.

In this counterfactual, the religious landscape of Arabia would be shaped by a Christianity that remained ethically and scripturally closer to its Jewish roots and by a rabbinic tradition operating under less external pressure. These conditions would significantly change the context in which any new prophetic movement could arise and would therefore alter the likelihood and character of the revelations that historically produced the Quran. The broader consequences of these changes for medieval and modern religious history are considered in the sections that follow.

10. Trajectories Through Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period

A Christianity whose written authorities remained limited to the *Didache* and the Hebrew Scriptures would follow institutional, doctrinal, and cultural trajectories markedly different from those that developed historically. The ethical, liturgical, and eschatological priorities established in the *Didache* would continue to shape the movement's development long after the period of its composition, producing a form of Christianity that remained more practical, more ethically concentrated, and less theologically elaborated than the tradition that emerged with the full New Testament canon.

Institutional Development and Authority Structures The hybrid model of leadership described in the *Didache*—tested itinerant prophets and teachers alongside locally appointed bishops and deacons—would likely persist longer than it did historically. Without written apostolic letters to provide alternative models of authority or to resolve disputes through appeal to specific texts, communities would continue to rely on the testing procedures and moral qualifications outlined in the manual. Over time, the risks associated with itinerant ministry might gradually shift greater responsibility toward stable local leadership, yet the principle of tested charismatic ministry would remain influential. This could produce church structures that balanced local oversight with openness to prophetic voices more consistently than emerged in trajectories dominated by episcopal or imperial models. Institutional growth would likely be slower and more organic, driven by the attractiveness of ethical communities and clear ritual practices rather than by centralized doctrinal enforcement or imperial patronage.

Doctrinal and Theological Trajectories Doctrinal development would proceed along different lines and at a different pace. The absence of extended written resources for Christological or Trinitarian argumentation would reduce the intensity and frequency of the great controversies that historically occupied the fourth and fifth centuries. Questions concerning the person of Christ would still arise through pastoral need, external challenge, or reflection on the triadic baptismal formula and the language of the Eucharist prayers, but they would be addressed primarily through liturgical practice, oral tradition, and ethical implication rather than through conciliar definition. Soteriology would remain closely tied to perseverance in the Way of Life and readiness for the Lord's return. The result would be a theological tradition that stayed more integrated with worship and moral formation and less prone to the sharp divisions that historically accompanied elaborate doctrinal systems. Later theological reflection would likely emphasize the practical meaning of the Two Ways, the significance of the Eucharist prayers, and the hope expressed in the eschatological vision rather than the development of systematic metaphysics.

Liturgical and Devotional Continuity The liturgical patterns established in the *Didache* would provide a stable core for Christian worship across regions and centuries. The fixed thanksgiving

prayers, the requirement of reconciliation before participation, the rhythms of daily prayer and weekly fasting, and the triadic baptismal formula would create a recognizable continuity of practice. Without competing written liturgical texts or theological treatises to introduce alternative forms, these practices would likely remain relatively uniform. Devotional life would center on the disciplines already prescribed: regular recitation of the Lord's Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and watchfulness in light of the coming Lord. This liturgical and devotional stability would contribute to a strong sense of shared identity even in the absence of extensive written theological resources.

Social and Ethical Character of Christian Communities Christian communities would be distinguished primarily by their ethical seriousness and communal practices. The Two Ways would continue to function as the central framework for moral formation and mutual accountability. Visible marks of Christian life—generosity toward the poor, care for the vulnerable, commitment to reconciliation, and disciplined speech and conduct—would serve as the primary witness to surrounding society. The emphasis on enemy-love and non-retaliation would shape responses to hostility or persecution. Over time, this ethical concentration could produce communities known for their practical righteousness and mutual support, potentially attracting converts through the attractiveness of their common life rather than through extended doctrinal argumentation. At the same time, the high ethical demand might generate internal challenges around failure, restoration, and the relationship between grace and human effort, requiring ongoing pastoral attention.

Relationship to Political Power and Empire The relationship between Christianity and imperial authority would likely develop differently. A Christianity whose written authorities remained limited and whose theology stayed closely tied to ethics and liturgy would present less of a direct challenge or resource for imperial ideology than emerged historically. Imperial patronage, when it occurred, might focus more on the social benefits of orderly and charitable communities than on the enforcement of specific doctrinal positions. Conversely, periods of persecution or restriction might be met with responses shaped by the *Didache*'s emphasis on endurance, love of enemies, and readiness for trial. The movement's institutional development would therefore remain more independent of imperial structures, producing forms of Christianity that were less closely aligned with state power and potentially more resilient in periods of political change.

Mission, Expansion, and Cultural Engagement Mission would continue to be shaped by the combination of ethical witness and eschatological urgency. The multiplication of false prophets and the turning of love into hate described in the eschatological vision would keep before the community the need for faithful testimony. Expansion would likely occur more through the establishment of visible ethical communities and the attractiveness of their common life than

through large-scale narrative proclamation or doctrinal debate. Cultural engagement would be guided by the principle of walking the Way of Life within existing social structures while maintaining clear moral boundaries. The absence of extensive written resources for addressing complex philosophical or cultural questions might slow certain forms of intellectual engagement, yet the clarity of the ethical and liturgical core would provide a stable foundation for mission across diverse contexts.

Interaction with Judaism and Other Traditions As explored in earlier sections, interaction with Jewish communities would likely remain more fluid and regionally varied for longer periods. The ethical and scriptural continuity between the *Didache* and Jewish tradition would reduce some sources of conflict while the distinctive rituals and eschatological hope centered on Jesus would maintain meaningful differentiation. Similar patterns of interaction might develop with other religious traditions encountered during expansion. The overall posture would likely be one of ethical distinctiveness combined with openness to shared moral ground rather than one of sharp doctrinal confrontation.

Overall Shape of Christianity in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages By the early medieval period, Christianity in this counterfactual would present a recognizable but distinctive profile. It would be marked by strong ethical dualism, stable liturgical practices, tested forms of leadership that balanced charismatic and local authority, and an eschatological hope closely tied to present moral perseverance. Theological development would remain more integrated with worship and ethics and less prone to elaborate systematic or metaphysical elaboration. Institutional structures would likely be more decentralized and resilient, less dependent on imperial support or centralized doctrinal enforcement. The movement would retain a closer ethical and scriptural relationship with its Jewish roots while maintaining clear Christian identity through baptism, Eucharist, and the expectation of the Lord's return. This configuration would produce a Christianity that was in many respects more primitive in its written resources yet potentially more consistent in its ethical and liturgical expression than the tradition that developed with the full New Testament canon.

The consequences of this long-term trajectory for modern religious thought and interfaith relations are considered in the following section.

11. Resonances and Implications for Modern Religious Thought and Interfaith Relations

The counterfactual scenario in which the *Didache* functions as Christianity's primary written authority alongside the Hebrew Scriptures offers significant points of resonance and challenge for contemporary theological reflection, ethical practice, and interfaith engagement. Although

the scenario is historically speculative, the distinctive profile it produces illuminates several live questions in modern religious thought.

Ethical Formation and the Two Ways Today The central role of the Two Ways in the counterfactual would resonate with contemporary interest in practical discipleship and ethical formation. In a setting where moral instruction precedes and shapes theological reflection, Christian identity would be understood first as a concrete way of life rather than as assent to a set of doctrinal propositions. This emphasis aligns with current conversations about the priority of practice in Christian formation, the integration of ethics and spirituality, and the need for communities that embody their convictions visibly. The strong call to enemy-love, generosity, reconciliation before worship, and watchfulness could inform contemporary discussions of Christian ethics in polarized societies. At the same time, the high ethical demand would raise perennial questions about grace, failure, and restoration that modern pastoral theology continues to address.

Christology and Soteriology in Contemporary Perspective A functional and liturgical Christology, expressed primarily through titles such as Servant and Lord and through participation in the Eucharist prayers, would offer a different angle on current Christological reflection. Rather than beginning with metaphysical categories or narrative reconstructions of Jesus' life, this approach centers on Jesus as the one through whom life, knowledge, and eschatological hope are mediated. Such a profile might resonate with theological movements that seek to recover the practical and relational dimensions of Christology or that emphasize the integration of worship and ethics. Soteriology centered on perseverance in the Way of Life would similarly engage ongoing debates about the relationship between faith and works, grace and human responsibility. The absence of extended written resources for forensic or substitutionary models of atonement would shift attention toward ethical transformation and eschatological hope as primary categories of salvation.

Ecclesiology, Leadership, and Liturgical Practice The hybrid leadership model of tested charismatic ministry alongside morally qualified local oversight would speak to contemporary discussions about authority, accountability, and the relationship between institutional structure and spiritual vitality. The requirement that prophets and teachers be judged by their conduct rather than by claims to inspiration alone could inform current conversations about discernment in charismatic and renewal movements. The strong emphasis on reconciliation before participation in the Eucharist and on confession within the assembly would resonate with interest in restorative practices and communal accountability. Fixed liturgical elements, such as the thanksgiving prayers and the regular rhythms of prayer and fasting, might appeal to those seeking greater stability and shared form in worship across diverse contexts. At the same

time, the relative simplicity of the written resources would highlight the ongoing importance of oral tradition, pastoral wisdom, and lived example in sustaining community life.

Eschatology and Christian Hope The concise yet vivid eschatological vision of the *Didache* would offer a distinctive contribution to contemporary eschatological reflection. By integrating watchfulness directly with ethical perseverance and communal readiness, this vision avoids both overly speculative timetables and purely realized or spiritualized interpretations of the end. The expectation of the Lord's return on the clouds, accompanied by the resurrection of the righteous, would keep future hope concrete and motivating without requiring elaborate symbolic systems. This profile could inform current discussions that seek to recover the ethical and missional implications of eschatology or that wish to hold together present responsibility and future hope. The brevity of the written scenario would also underscore the role of oral tradition and pastoral guidance in interpreting eschatological expectation in changing circumstances.

Jewish-Christian Relations and Interfaith Dialogue The stronger ethical and scriptural continuity between the *Didache*-only Christianity and Jewish tradition would have significant implications for contemporary Jewish-Christian relations. A Christianity whose authoritative text remained closer in tone and content to Jewish ethical and liturgical patterns might foster different patterns of dialogue and mutual understanding. The reduced sharpness of supersessionist claims and the slower differentiation from Jewish tradition could inform current efforts to rethink traditional models of the "parting of the ways" and to develop more nuanced accounts of continuity and difference. Interfaith conversations might benefit from exploring shared ethical frameworks, such as the Two Ways or similar dualistic moral schemas in Jewish tradition, as common ground for cooperation on issues of justice, care for the vulnerable, and communal integrity. At the same time, the distinctive Christian rituals and eschatological hope centered on Jesus would maintain clear identity without requiring the elaboration of complex doctrinal barriers.

Challenges to Modern Doctrinal and Institutional Complexity One of the most provocative resonances of the counterfactual lies in its challenge to the doctrinal and institutional complexity that characterizes much of modern Christianity. A movement whose written authorities remained limited and whose primary focus stayed on ethical practice, liturgical order, and eschatological readiness would present a simpler, more integrated profile. This simplicity could illuminate critiques of denominational fragmentation, the proliferation of doctrinal statements, and the distance that sometimes exists between theological systems and lived discipleship. It might encourage reflection on whether certain forms of complexity serve the core purposes of Christian life or whether they have become self-perpetuating. At the same time, the scenario would also reveal the limitations of such simplicity, particularly in addressing

novel intellectual, cultural, or pastoral challenges that require resources beyond those contained in a single short manual.

Mission and Public Witness Finally, the counterfactual would highlight the power of ethical and communal witness in mission. A Christianity known primarily for its visible commitment to the Way of Life, its practices of reconciliation and generosity, and its posture of watchfulness might offer a distinctive model for public engagement in pluralistic societies. The integration of ethics and eschatology would encourage a form of witness that combines clear moral conviction with hopeful realism about the present age. This profile could inform contemporary discussions about the relationship between word and deed in mission, the importance of credible communal life, and the role of hope in sustaining faithful presence in difficult circumstances.

In these and other areas, the counterfactual scenario does not provide ready-made answers but rather illuminates alternative possibilities and raises productive questions. By imagining a Christianity whose written foundation remained narrow and practical, the exercise invites contemporary reflection on what is essential to Christian identity and how that identity might be expressed in ways that are both faithful to its origins and responsive to present challenges.

12. Reflections on Counterfactual Methodology and the Value of Such Exercises

The preceding sections have traced one extended counterfactual scenario in which the *Didache* functions as Christianity's primary written authority. Before concluding, it is appropriate to reflect on the nature of counterfactual history itself, its particular value when applied to religious development, and the specific insights this exercise has sought to generate.

The Nature and Purpose of Counterfactual History Counterfactual history proceeds by altering one or more conditions in the past and tracing the plausible consequences of that alteration. It does not claim to describe what would have happened with certainty, but rather to explore the range of plausible outcomes that become visible once a particular variable is changed. Historians and social scientists have long used this method to illuminate the contingency of events and to assess the causal importance of specific factors. In religious history, where developments often appear inevitable in retrospect, counterfactual analysis can help recover a sense of openness and to identify which documents, decisions, or circumstances exercised decisive influence.

Strengths of the Method in Religious Studies When applied to the formation of religious traditions, counterfactual history has several strengths. It highlights the contingency of outcomes that later came to seem natural or necessary. The eventual shape of Christian theology, ecclesiology, and interfaith relations was not predetermined by the life and teachings of Jesus alone; it depended heavily on which writings achieved authoritative status and on how

those writings were interpreted over time. By removing the entire New Testament corpus while retaining the *Didache*, the present exercise makes visible how much of later Christian development rested on the specific narrative, theological, and apocalyptic resources that the *Didache* does not supply. The method also clarifies the relative importance of different elements within a tradition. In this scenario, the ethical dualism, liturgical instructions, and eschatological vision of the *Didache* prove capable of sustaining a coherent form of Christianity even without additional written authorities, suggesting that these elements carried substantial independent weight.

Limitations and Risks Counterfactual history also carries significant limitations. Any alteration of the past requires assumptions about what would have remained constant, and those assumptions are always debatable. In the present exercise, for example, the continued vitality of oral tradition about Jesus is assumed, yet the precise content and influence of that tradition cannot be known with precision. There is also a risk of underestimating human religious creativity; even with limited written resources, communities would have generated new interpretations, practices, and texts over time. Another danger lies in presentism—the tendency to evaluate past developments primarily by how well they serve contemporary concerns. While the scenario has been constructed to remain as historically plausible as possible, it inevitably reflects the questions and interests of the present. Finally, counterfactuals cannot be empirically verified; their value lies in the clarity they bring to causal relationships rather than in predictive accuracy.

What This Particular Exercise Reveals Despite these limitations, the exercise illuminates several important features of early Christian development. It demonstrates that the *Didache* contains within itself sufficient resources to support a recognizable form of Christianity focused on ethical formation, liturgical practice, tested leadership, and eschatological hope. It shows how the absence of the Gospels and apostolic letters would have produced a Christianity that remained more closely aligned with Jewish ethical and scriptural traditions for a longer period. It suggests that the pressures contributing to the consolidation of rabbinic Judaism and to the emergence of Islam would have been significantly different, with potentially far-reaching consequences for the religious history of late antiquity and the medieval period. These insights do not prove that history would have unfolded exactly as described, but they do indicate that the specific documents that became the New Testament exercised an influence far beyond what their modest origins might suggest.

Implications for Understanding Canonical Formation One of the most significant contributions of this counterfactual lies in its implications for how we understand the formation of the Christian canon. The eventual exclusion of the *Didache* from the New Testament and the inclusion of the Gospels, letters, and Apocalypse were not neutral or inevitable processes. They

shaped the subsequent character of Christian theology, worship, ethics, and interfaith relations in profound ways. By imagining a world in which the *Didache* remained the primary written authority, the exercise makes visible what was gained and what was lost in the actual process of canonization. It invites reflection on whether the strengths of the resulting tradition—its narrative richness, theological depth, and capacity for doctrinal development—were purchased at the cost of certain forms of ethical clarity, liturgical stability, or continuity with Jewish tradition that a different canonical outcome might have preserved.

Value for Contemporary Reflection Beyond its historical interest, the counterfactual offers resources for contemporary theological and interfaith reflection. It challenges assumptions that current forms of Christian doctrine, institutional structure, or interfaith posture are the only possible expressions of Christian faith. It suggests that alternative configurations—more ethically centered, more liturgically stable, and more continuous with Jewish moral tradition—are at least conceivable. At the same time, it reveals the limitations and vulnerabilities that such configurations would likely encounter, particularly in responding to intellectual or cultural challenges that require resources beyond those contained in a single short manual. The exercise thus encourages a posture of both appreciation for the actual historical path and critical awareness of its contingency.

Conclusion of the Methodological Reflection Counterfactual history is not a substitute for careful reconstruction of what actually occurred. Its value lies in the questions it raises and the contrasts it makes visible. In the present case, the removal of the New Testament corpus while retaining the *Didache* has served to highlight the decisive role of canonical formation in shaping the subsequent history of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It has also illustrated both the generative power and the inherent limitations of the ethical, liturgical, and eschatological resources preserved in the *Didache* itself. Whether or not one finds the specific trajectory traced in these pages plausible, the exercise demonstrates that the religious world we inhabit was not the only possible world that could have emerged from the early Christian movement. Recognizing that contingency can foster both humility about the present and renewed attention to the choices and documents that have shaped our traditions.

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Appendix: Full text of the Didache

The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations

Chapter 1. The Two Ways and the First Commandment. There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to every one who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what. And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

Chapter 2. The Second Commandment: Grave Sin Forbidden. And the second commandment of the Teaching; You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born. You shall not covet the things of your neighbor, you shall not swear, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.

Chapter 3. Other Sins Forbidden. My child, flee from every evil thing, and from every likeness of it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leads to murder. Be neither jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper, for out of all these murders are engendered. My child, be not a lustful one, for lust leads to fornication. Be neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye, for out of all these adulteries are engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens, since it leads to idolatry. Be neither an

enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look at these things, for out of all these idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since a lie leads to theft. Be neither money-loving, nor vainglorious, for out of all these thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads the way to blasphemy. Be neither self-willed nor evil-minded, for out of all these blasphemies are engendered.

Rather, be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, nor give over-confidence to your soul. Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with just and lowly ones shall it have its intercourse. Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

Chapter 4. Various Precepts. My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to you, and honor him as you do the Lord. For wherever the lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord. And seek out day by day the faces of the saints, in order that you may rest upon their words. Do not long for division, but rather bring those who contend to peace. Judge righteously, and do not respect persons in reproving for transgressions. You shall not be undecided whether or not it shall be. Be not a stretcher forth of the hands to receive and a drawer of them back to give. If you have anything, through your hands you shall give ransom for your sins. Do not hesitate to give, nor complain when you give; for you shall know who is the good repayer of the hire. Do not turn away from him who is in want; rather, share all things with your brother, and do not say that they are your own. For if you are partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal? Do not remove your hand from your son or daughter; rather, teach them the fear of God from their youth. Do not enjoin anything in your bitterness upon your bondman or maidservant, who hope in the same God, lest ever they shall fear not God who is over both; for he comes not to call according to the outward appearance, but to them whom the Spirit has prepared. And you bondmen shall be subject to your masters as to a type of God, in modesty and fear. You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord. Do not in any way forsake the commandments of the Lord; but keep what you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking away therefrom. In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

Chapter 5. The Way of Death. And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and accursed: murders, adultery, lust, fornication, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rape, false witness, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing a reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for that which is good, but for that which is evil; from whom meekness

and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, not pitying a poor man, not laboring for the afflicted, not knowing Him Who made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from him who is in want, afflicting him who is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, utter sinners. Be delivered, children, from all these.

Chapter 6. Against False Teachers, and Food Offered to Idols. See that no one causes you to err from this way of the Teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able to do this, do what you are able. And concerning food, bear what you are able; but against that which is sacrificed to idols be exceedingly careful; for it is the service of dead gods.

Chapter 7. Concerning Baptism. And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Chapter 8. Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer). But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, like this:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Thine is the power and the glory for ever.

Pray this three times each day.

Chapter 9. The Eucharist. Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup:

We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever.

And concerning the broken bread:

We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together

from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

Chapter 10. Prayer after Communion. But after you are filled, give thanks this way:

We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which You didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You modest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Master almighty, didst create all things for Thy name's sake; You gavest food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us You didst freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Servant. Before all things we thank Thee that You are mighty; to Thee be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou have prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.

But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.

Chapter 11. Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets. Whosoever, therefore, comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turns and teaches another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not. But if he teaches so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the decree of the Gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain more than one day; or two days, if there's a need. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit does not eat it, unless he is indeed a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself does, shall not be judged among you, for with God he has his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever says in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, you shall

not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.

Chapter 12. Reception of Christians. But receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove and know him afterward; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is an artisan, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep away from such.

Chapter 13. Support of Prophets. But every true prophet who wants to live among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter 14. Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day. But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations."

Chapter 15. Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof. Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers. And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel. But to anyone that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds so do, as you have it in the Gospel of our Lord.

Chapter 16. Watchfulness; the Coming of the Lord. Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect in the last

time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead — yet not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

DIDACHE:
THE TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES